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# X-MEN®

## *SWORD OF THE BRADDOCKS*

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CLARK

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As part of the reality-hopping heroes known as the EXILES, Betsy Braddock, a.k.a. PSYLOCKE, has fought countless battles against unbeatable odds. But no battle has left a scar as deep as her fight with the vicious SLAYMASTER. Since Psylocke's narrow escape from their first battle, Slaymaster has been hell-bent on tracking her down and finishing her off for good. He travels the infinite parallel dimensions, killing analogue versions of her in alternate realities. With each version of Betsy that is destroyed, he gets closer to achieving his murderous goal.

The only question left: is Betsy strong enough to stand against this gruesome foe and will she emerge victorious?



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# EXILES: PSYLOCKE

## the face of FEAR

BY CHRIS CLAREMONT  
& SCOTT CLARK  
WITH DAVID BEATY

MY NAME'S  
ELIZABETH  
BRADDOCK.

MY SUPER HERO  
IDENTITY IS  
PSYLOCKE.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG,  
I DREAMED OF  
SAVING THE WORLD.

NOW THAT I'M GROWN,  
AS PART OF THE EXILES,  
I GET TO SAFEGUARD  
THE OMNIVERSE, ONE  
DIMENSION AT A TIME.

JUST THINKING ABOUT IT  
MAKES ME SHIVER--AND  
NOT IN A GOOD WAY.

I LOOK UP AT THE  
SKY HERE AT THE  
CRYSTAL PALACE AND  
BEHOLD THE TOTALITY  
OF CREATION. THOSE  
AREN'T STARS I SEE  
OVERHEAD, THEY'RE  
ENTIRE DIMENSIONS.  
SO MANY PLANETS, SO  
MUCH LIFE, I DON'T  
EVEN HAVE A NUMBER  
BIG ENOUGH TO  
DESCRIBE IT.

SO I GUESS MY  
CHILDHOOD  
DREAM CAME  
TRUE.

WORD TO  
THE WISE,  
BE VERY  
CAREFUL  
WHAT YOU  
WISH FOR.

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WHAT WAS IT  
SHAKESPEARE SAID?

"WE FEW, WE HAPPY  
FEW, WE BAND OF  
BROTHERS..."

NOT EXACTLY  
THE LIFE I  
IMAGINED FOR  
MYSELF...

...BUT I COULDN'T  
WISH FOR BETTER.

THERE'S  
JUST  
ONE  
DRAW-  
BACK...

AUGH!

OH DEAR  
BLOODY--  
NOT  
AGAIN!

EVERY SO  
OFTEN,  
UTTERLY  
WITHOUT  
WARNING...

...THIS  
HAPPENS.

I GET SLAMMED BY  
A RESONANCE  
WAVE OF ENERGY...

...THAT TELLS  
ME ANOTHER  
VERSION OF  
MYSELF IS  
ABOUT TO DIE.



SO WHAT'S THE  
PROBLEM, YOU  
MAY WELL ASK.



FIND THE GUY  
RESPONSIBLE  
AND PUT A  
STOP TO THIS.

AFTER ALL,  
HOW HARD  
CAN IT BE?



YOU MAY WELL ASK.

THE THING YOU  
REALLY HAVE TO  
REMEMBER IS THAT  
THE KEY WORD HERE  
IS "INFINITY."

I'VE NO WAY  
OF KNOWING  
WHERE HE'LL  
POP UP NEXT,  
OR WHERE  
HE'LL GO FROM  
THERE. NO  
WAY TO STOP  
HIM BEFORE  
HE LEAVES.

AND IF I DO  
CATCH HIM--  
NO WAY OF  
KNOWING  
WHO'LL WIN.



WHATEVER  
DO WE HAVE  
HERE, MY  
LOVE?

GOT A  
NERVE, I'M  
THINKING,  
INTERRUPTING  
OUR PRIVATE  
MOMENT.

MY  
DARLING,  
YOU'RE  
HIM, HE'S  
YOU!



SLAYMASTER--  
THIS ANALOGUE OF  
YOU HAS COME TO  
KILL ME.

HE'S DONE IT  
BEFORE, COUNTLESS  
TIMES. HE'S NOT  
BOTHERING TO SHIELD  
HIS MIND, I SEE THE  
IMAGES CLEARLY IN  
HIS THOUGHTS.



NOT TO WORRY, MY  
PRECIOUS, IN A MATTER  
OF MOMENTS...

THOSE  
IMAGES--AND  
HIS LIFE--WILL  
END.



BUT  
FIRST...



I DON'T  
KNOW WHY  
YOU'RE HERE,  
"COPYCAT"--

--AND QUITE  
FRANKLY, I DON'T  
CARE--!

GET IN  
CLOSE,  
BELOVED! I  
WANT TO  
SEE HIM  
BLEED!



YOU TALK  
TOO MUCH.

HE BLOCKED  
MY ATTACK. HE'S  
FASTER THAN ME--  
HE'S TURNING THE  
FORCE OF MY ATTACK  
AGAINST ME!



I PREFER TO LET MY  
WEAPONS--AND MY  
SKILLS--SPEAK  
FOR ME.

SHINK!



WHAT--  
WHAT  
HAVE YOU  
DONE?!

NOTHING  
LIKE THIS HAS  
EVER HAPPENED  
BEFORE--

--BUT  
THEN, I'VE  
NEVER SLAIN  
ANOTHER  
VERSION OF  
MYSELF  
BEFORE.

THIS GLOW, IT'S  
THE ESSENCE OF HIS  
POWER CONVERTED  
INTO SOME KIND OF  
ENERGY.

SOMEHOW,  
I'M  
ABSORBING  
IT.

I'VE NEVER  
FELT SUCH  
INCREDIBLE  
SENSATIONS--  
THEY'RE  
FANTASTIC!

ENJOY THEM,  
BUTCHER--BECAUSE  
I SWEAR THEY'LL BE  
THE LAST--

--WHAT'S  
HAPPENING?!

NEITHER MY  
TELEPATHY NOR  
MY TK CAN TOUCH  
HIM! MY STRONGEST  
ATTACKS ARE  
HAVING NO  
EFFECT!

SOMEHOW--  
SLAYING THIS  
OTHER ME, AND  
ABSORBING HIS  
STRENGTH...

HAS MADE ME  
IMMEASURABLY  
STRONGER!



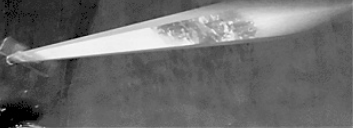
I DON'T UNDER-  
STAND HOW HE CAN  
DO THIS--

--AND RIGHT  
NOW, I DON'T  
CARE. IF I CAN'T  
MATCH HIS  
POWER...

IT'S TIME  
TO END THIS  
FIGHT.



NOT SO  
FAST, MY  
DEAR.



REMEMBER,  
YOU'RE THE  
ONE I'VE  
COME FOR.



YOU WOMEN ARE  
A COURAGEOUS  
LINE. I'LL CONCEDE  
YOU THAT.

ALL OF YOU  
FIGHTING FOR  
YOUR PRECIOUS  
LIVES, RIGHT TO  
THE END.



WHO ARE  
YOU? WHY ARE  
YOU DOING  
THIS?

I DON'T  
EVEN KNOW  
YOU.



DON'T DO THIS.  
PLEASE DON'T  
DO THIS.

I'M NOT  
YOUR  
ENEMY. I  
CAN HELP  
YOU. I'LL  
DO ANY-  
THING--

--JUST  
LET ME  
LIVE!



NO.  
YOU ARE  
NOT  
WORTHY.

THERE ARE MANY  
DIMENSIONS, EACH  
WITH AN ALTERNATE  
VERSION OF YOU.

I SEEK ONE AMONG  
YOUR KIND IN PARTICULAR,  
THE ONLY ADVERSARY  
WHO EVER ESCAPED ME.



JUST LIKE THAT,  
SHE'S DEAD.

A PART OF ME,  
I THINK, DIED  
WITH HER.



THE CONTACT  
BETWEEN US  
ENDED WITH  
HER LIFE--



--LEAVING ME  
ALONE WITH  
MY MEMORIES.



ON MY HOMELAND, IN MY  
DIMENSION, OUR VERSION OF  
SLAYMASTER WAS AN ADVERSARY  
OF MY BROTHER, CAPTAIN BRITAIN.



BUT BRIAN HAD GIVEN UP  
BEING A SUPER HERO. I  
HAD STEPPED FORWARD  
TO TAKE HIS PLACE.

I WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH  
TO DEFEAT SLAYMASTER.

HE FELT *INSULTED*  
TO BE CHALLENGED  
BY A WOMAN.



TO TEACH ME  
A LESSON--  
AND THEREBY  
HURT BRIAN--

--HE  
DESTROYED  
MY EYES.

AAAAA

I DON'T SLEEP MUCH AT NIGHT, I HAVEN'T SLEPT MUCH AT ALL LATELY.

I DREAM TOO MUCH ABOUT THE DEAD, OR WORSE, ABOUT THEIR KILLER.

ALL RIGHT, SAGE. LET'S GET TO WORK. RUN THE SIMULATION.

WOULD IT DO ANY GOOD TO SUGGEST YOU WAIT?

FOR WHAT? FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO BE SLAUGHTERED?

THIS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH. IT'S TIME TO BRING IT TO AN END.

AS YOU WISH, MY FRIEND.

THIS IS SO NOT GOOD. HER ADVERSARY IS MERELY A SOLID HOLOGRAM, YET BETSY REACTS AS IF SHE FACED THE REAL THING.

BETTER. THIS TIME, BETSY'S HOLDING HER OWN.

BUT WHERE CAN SHE-- WILL SHE-- GO FROM HERE?

USUALLY, I PREFER TO FIGHT SLAYMASTER WITH MY MUSCLES. MY HUMAN FIGHTING SKILLS.

THIS TIME, I CUT LOOSE WITH TK.

IT'S ALMOST LIKE THE HOLOGRAM WAS WAITING FOR ME TO TRY THIS.

BEFORE I EVEN KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING, MY STRIKE IS DEFLECTED RIGHT BACK AT ME.



I'M OFF-BALANCE FOR PERHAPS A FEW SECONDS...

...BUT THAT'S  
ALL THE TIME  
HE NEEDS.



JUST LIKE  
THAT, I'M  
CUT AND  
BLEEDING.



THINGS GO DOWNHILL  
FROM THERE, PRETTY  
MUCH AT ROCKET SPEED.

IN A PANIC,  
I LIFT OFF,  
FIGURING TO  
BUY MYSELF  
SOME SPACE  
TO RECOVER  
MY BALANCE.



BUT SLAYMASTER  
REACTS LIKE HE CAN  
READ MY MIND...



AND  
YANKS ME  
BACK  
DOWN TO  
EARTH.





IN THE SPLIT-SECOND IT TAKES  
ME TO GET MY BEARINGS,  
HE'S ON TOP OF ME.

JUST LIKE  
THAT, EVERY-  
THING'S OVER.



DID YOU TRULY  
THINK YOU WERE  
MY EQUAL?

SILLY  
GIRL, YOU  
REALLY SHOULD  
HAVE KEPT  
RUNNING.



UNTIL I  
HAVE THE  
CHANCE TO  
SLAUGHTER  
YOU AGAIN,  
ELIZABETH,  
FAREWELL.

I CAN HEAR SAGE CALLING  
OUT TO ME, BUT I CAN'T SEEM  
TO FIND A WAY TO RESPOND.

EVERYTHING INSIDE  
OF ME SEEMS TO BE  
SHUTTING DOWN.

I ACTUALLY  
FEEL...DEAD.

AGAIN.



WHAT'S THE PLAN, MY FRIEND--

--RUN TIL YOU DROP?

GIVEN YOUR POWERS AND YOUR STRENGTH...

YOU DO REALIZE THAT'S LIKELY NEVER TO HAPPEN.

COURSE YOU DO.

YOU'RE JUST BEING STUBBORN

YOU CAN'T RUN AWAY, ELIZABETH-- FROM THIS OR ME.

YOU STOOD BY ME WHEN I NEEDED IT. THIS IS MY TURN TO DO THE SAME.

WHAT IS IT YOU WANT, ELIZABETH?

WHAT IS IT THAT HURTS?



FOR ALMOST THE WHOLE OF MY ADULT LIFE, THE DESTINY OF US BRADDOCK TWINS HAS BEEN DEFINED BY MERLYN.

HE TRANSFORMED BRIAN INTO CAPTAIN BRITAIN.

THE LAST I SAW MERLYN, HE SEEMED TOTALLY MAD.

WATCHING HIM NOW, I FIND MYSELF WONDERING...

...IF I COULD HAVE BEEN WRONG.

UNFORTUNATELY, ONE OF THE HALLMARKS OF OUR LIVES AS HEROES IS THAT GOOD NEWS NEVER LASTS.

SUDDENLY, IT ISN'T MERLYN'S SCENE ANYMORE, BUT MY BROTHER'S...

...AS SLAYMASTER DOES TO HIM WHAT HIS NAMESAKE IN OUR DIMENSION DID TO ME, YEARS AGO.

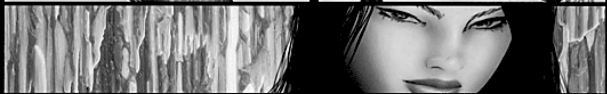
JUST LIKE THAT, THIS VERSION OF BRIAN IS DOWN AND BLIND.

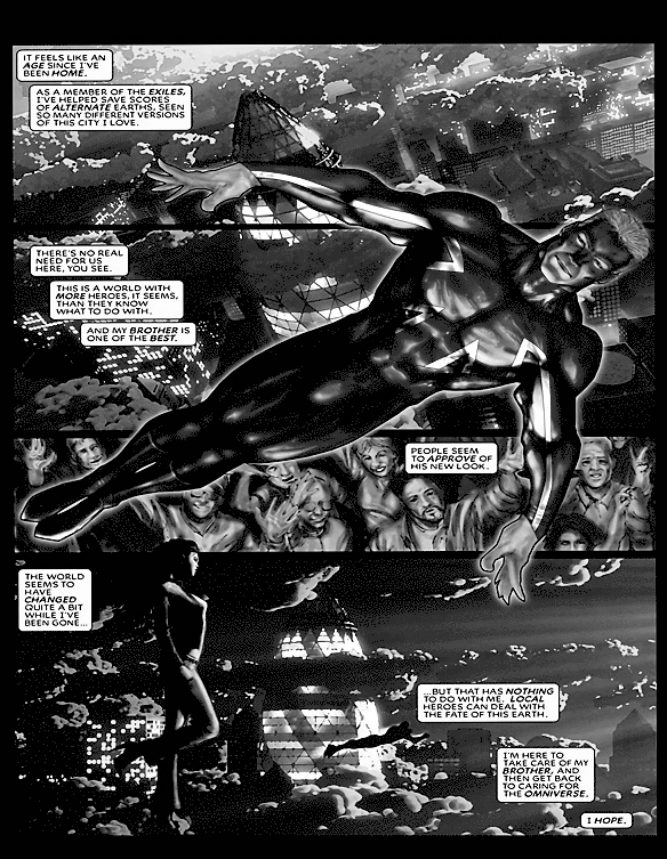
IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH SLAYMASTER KNOWS I CAN SEE THIS.

REVENGE IS SWEET, MY DEAR. DON'T YOU AGREE?

CONSIDER THIS THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE FAST APPROACHING.







IT FEELS LIKE AN  
AGE SINCE I'VE  
BEEN HOME.

AS A MEMBER OF THE EXILES,  
I'VE HELPED SAVE SCORES  
OF ALTERNATE EARTHS, SEEN  
SO MANY DIFFERENT VERSIONS  
OF THIS CITY I LOVE.

THERE'S NO REAL  
NEED FOR US  
HERE, YOU SEE.

THIS IS A WORLD WITH  
MORE HEROES, IT SEEMS,  
THAN THEY KNOW  
WHAT TO DO WITH.

AND MY BROTHER IS  
ONE OF THE BEST.

PEOPLE SEEM  
TO APPROVE OF  
HIS NEW LOOK.

THE WORLD  
SEEMS TO  
HAVE  
CHANGED  
QUITE A BIT  
WHILE I'VE  
BEEN GONE...

BUT THAT HAS NOTHING  
TO DO WITH ME. LOCAL  
HEROES CAN DEAL WITH  
THE FATE OF THIS EARTH.

I'M HERE TO  
TAKE CARE OF MY  
BROTHER, AND  
THEN GET BACK  
TO CARING FOR  
THE OMNIVERSE.

I HOPE.

I INDULGED FAR TOO MUCH TODAY, VISITING OLD HAUNTS...

...MAKING MY FAVORITE DESIGNERS VERY HAPPY...

SPLURGING ON A DELICIOUS DINNER...

Avalon Bistro

...AND BEST OF ALL, A BRAND-NEW MOTORCYCLE TO SIMPLY DIE FOR.

I DIDN'T TRY TO HIDE FROM MY OLD FASHION CROWD. MY BROTHER HATED THAT PART OF MY LIFE. IT WAS TOTALLY BEYOND HIS COMPREHENSION.

WORD WOULD QUICKLY GET AROUND THAT BETSY BRADDOCK WAS BACK IN TOWN.

QUESTION IS, WHO'D HEAR IT FIRST? GOOD GUYS...

...OR BAD?

BRIAN, BEING THE FAR MORE SENSIBLE OF WE TWINS, WOULD CAUTION TO BE CAREFUL WHAT I WISH FOR.

BLAM!

HE MAY HAVE A POINT.



BY THE  
PROPHET...  
HOW CAN  
THIS BE?!

I HAD HER  
DEAD IN MY  
SIGHTS. HOW  
COULD I HAVE  
MISSED?!

FIRST  
ANSWER,  
I WASN'T  
WEARING  
A BIKE  
HELMET, BUT  
MODIFIED  
MILITARY  
BATTLE  
HEADGEAR.



AND THANK HEAVEN  
FOR THAT BECAUSE  
SLAYMASTER'S ROUND  
WAS POWERFUL ENOUGH  
TO PUNCH THROUGH  
EVEN MY SKULL.

THE HELMET BROKE THE  
FORCE OF IMPACT JUST  
ENOUGH TO SAVE ME.



CAN'T GAMBLE ON BEING  
SO LUCKY AGAIN.

LOOKS LIKE HE'S FOUND  
A WAY TO COMPENSATE  
FOR MY SUPER-POWERS.



I CAN'T FIGHT  
HIM WITH TK.

WE'LL HAVE  
TO USE OUR  
PHYSICAL  
BODIES, AND  
OUR SKILLS.



TROUBLE IS,  
HARD AS  
I'VE WORKED  
TO PREPARE  
FOR THIS  
NIGHT...

...HE'S  
ALWAYS  
BEEN  
BETTER.



AND HE  
KNOWS IT.

I AM IMPRESSED,  
MS. BRADDOCK..

..OR DO YOU  
PREFER YOUR  
NOM DE GUERRE,  
PSYLOCKE?

YOU'RE MUCH  
BETTER THAN  
WHEN LAST WE  
FOUGHT..

..BUT  
THEN, SO  
AM I.

THAT'S  
AN  
EXCELLENT  
RECOVERY  
FROM MY  
ATTACK.

ARE YOU  
FAMILIAR WITH  
THIS COUNTER-  
STRIKE?

APPARENTLY  
NOT.

BASH!

SADLY-- FOR  
YOU--THIS IS JUST  
THE BEGINNING.

AS I  
DRAW YOUR  
BLOOD...

SO  
SHALL I  
TAKE YOUR  
LIFE.



LEAVE THE WOMAN BE,  
BUTCHER!

LONDON'S  
PACKED THICK  
WITH POLICE  
SECURITY  
CAMERAS--

--DID YOU  
TRULY THINK THIS  
FIGHT WOULD GO  
UNNOTICED?



ARE YOU  
ALL RIGHT, MISS--  
BEFSY???

IS IT REALLY  
YOU?? THIS IS  
INCREDIBLE...IT'S  
FANTASTIC--!

BRIAN--  
BEHIND  
YOU!



SOMETIMES,  
MY TWIN  
CAN BE SO  
STUPID!

ARGKH!



HE GAVE SLAYMASTER  
AN OPENING.

YOU SEEM  
SURPRISED,  
CAPTAIN.  
DON'T BE.

I AM NOT THE  
SLAYMASTER YOU  
FOUGHT SOME  
TIME AGO.



I AM,  
RATHER,  
THE ONE WHO  
WILL KILL  
YOU.

**ZARK!**



BRIAN'S DIED WAY MORE THAN ME.

I DON'T INTEND TO LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN.



MY HEAD'S STILL RINGING FROM THAT FIRST HIT.

HERE'S HOPING MY BODY CAN STAND THE STRAIN.



BETSY-- YOU'RE HURT!

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW.

BUT AT LEAST HE'S OUT OF AMMO.

REST NOW. YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH. LET ME HANDLE THINGS FROM HERE!



NO! THIS IS MY FIGHT.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS.

YES, I DO--

--FOR REASONS YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT, DEAR BROTHER.



IT IS GOOD TO SEE IN YOU A WOMAN OF COURAGE.

IT WILL BE AN HONOR INDEED TO TAKE YOUR LIFE.

TALK IS CHEAP. SLAYMASTER-- COME AND GET ME--

--IF YOU CAN.



I WANT TO MAKE  
HIM MAD.

I GET MY  
WISH.



CLARK GALLERY

LUCKY  
ME.



THERE'S NO  
TIME TO  
REACT  
BEFORE HE  
SLAMS ME--  
RIGHT WHERE  
HIS ENERGY  
BEAM HIT  
HOME--

--DAMN, IT  
HURTS!



I TRY TO  
PUT SOME  
DISTANCE  
BETWEEN  
US.



HE COMES  
RIGHT  
AFTER ME.  
FIGURING  
I'M ON THE  
ROPES.



SURPRISE  
FOR HIM  
THIS TIME.



I HOPE IT  
HURTS.



NOW IT'S MY TURN TO  
SHOW SOME SPEED,  
AS I RELEASE MY HOLD  
ON HIS BLADES--

--FIRST, TO  
SLAM HIM  
WITH A  
BACKHAND...



FOLLOWED BY AN  
OLD FASHIONED  
POWER HIT TO THE  
BREADBASKET.

SUDDENLY, FOR  
SLAYMASTER,  
THIS FIGHT ISN'T  
SO MUCH FUN  
ANYMORE.



I GUESS HE FIGURES IT'S  
TIME TO RUN, BIND HIS  
WOUNDS, TRY AGAIN IN  
SOME OTHER DIMENSION.

?



I DON'T  
THINK SO.

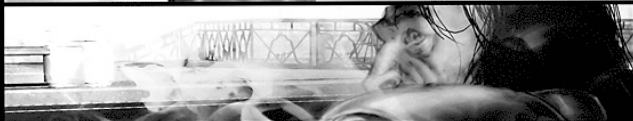
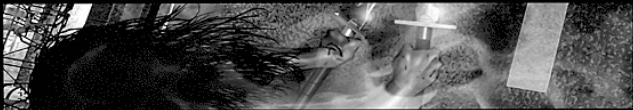
LOOKING  
FOR YOUR  
TELEPORTER?



THIS CHALLENGE  
IS TO THE DEATH,  
REMEMBER?



SO HOW 'BOUT  
WE SEE JUST HOW  
GOOD YOU  
REALLY ARE?



THIS ITERATION OF  
SLAYMASTER'S BEEN KILLING  
VARIANTS OF ME SINCE I  
JOINED THE EXILES.

I FELT EACH AND  
EVERY DEATH.

A PART OF EACH  
AND EVERY  
SLAUGHTERED  
SOUL BECAME  
A PART OF ME.

NOW, THEY  
MANIFEST  
THEMSELVES FOR  
THE FIRST AND  
ONLY TIME, TO  
WITNESS THIS  
BATTLE'S END.





ALL SLAYMASTER CAN  
SEE IS THE SCORE.

HE CAN'T HELP  
SMILING, IN PRIDE  
AND TRIUMPH.



I WAS COUNTING  
ON THAT.



IT MAKES THIS SO  
MUCH EASIER-- LIVE  
BY SLAUGHTER, DIE  
BY THE SAME.









TIME  
PASSES,  
LIFE  
GOES  
ON...

--SAGE SETS  
ME RIGHT, I  
REJOIN THE  
TEAM, WE GET  
BACK TO SAVING  
THE OMNIVERSE  
ONE DIMENSION  
AT A TIME,  
TEAMMATES  
COME, TEAM-  
MATES GO.



WE MAKE NEW  
FRIENDS, WE LOOK  
IN ON OLD ONES.

I BUILD A COLLECTION OF MEMORIES I'LL  
TREASURE ALWAYS YET STILL EAGERLY HUNGER  
FOR WHAT LIES OVER THE NEXT HORIZON.



BUT FOR ALL  
MY INNATE  
WANDERLUST,  
THE BIGGEST  
SURPRISE IS MY  
DISCOVERY OF  
HOW NICE IT IS  
TO HAVE SOME-  
ONE TO COME  
HOME TO.



THE ONLY THING  
STRANGER THAN  
THAT IS WHO IT IS.



THIS ISN'T  
THE LIFE I  
DREAMED OF  
FOR MYSELF.



BUT THAT'S THE  
INHERENT JOY OF  
BEING ALIVE, YOU  
NEVER REALLY  
KNOW WHAT  
COMES NEXT. NO  
MATTER HOW  
WELL YOU PLAN,  
YOU'LL ALWAYS  
BE BLINDSIDED.

THE TRICK IS TO  
TAKE THAT HIT  
AND FIND THE  
WAY TO MAKE  
THE OUTCOME  
BETTER.

FINAL CONCLUSION,  
I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE  
WHAT COMES NEXT.

used t' hit  
th' bars  
with Betsy,  
on occasion--  
many occasions,  
in fact--

--and trade  
war stories  
an' th' like  
over a  
few beers.

Or a lot  
of beers.

Her body might've  
been magically  
morphed into that of  
an Asian hottie...

...not that I'd  
have been likely  
to complain  
about that...

...but under that layer  
of exotic ninja hottess,  
Bets was *still* your  
classic, pint-swillin',  
'bloody 'ell' Brit chick.



'Course, she  
used t' give me  
a veritable *heap*  
of *crap* 'cause I  
drank beer with  
a *moose* on  
the label.

I told her not  
t' be *profanin'*  
my religion, eh?

Anyway, this *one* time, she  
was tellin' me about one of  
her top-secret, hush-hush, big-  
deal "covert oops" missions.

She always liked  
that "covert oops"  
line, for some reason.



THMP  
THMP  
THMP

STOP  
HER!





So far, this mission of hers sounded like the typical wackiness. Blades flashin', blood sprayin', thugs screamin' like little girls.

And stuff blowin' up good, of course.



**BLOODY TELL**

WRITTEN BY ADAM WARREN  
ILLUSTRATED BY RICK MAY'S  
COLORED BY GURU FOX LETTERS BY RANDY GENTILE  
ASSISTANT EDITOR - STEPHANIE MOORE  
EDITOR - CA. CERUSKY  
EDITOR IN CHIEF - JOE QUINLAN  
PRESIDENT - BILL JEMAS



Final  
command:

GET THE  
GIRL!

She was tusslin' with one  
of these cyber-enhanced,  
jacked-up, wired-t'-hell an'-  
back kinda goofballs, see?

Turns out the sucker had  
emergency backup  
neuro-software wired  
into his backbrain...

...so instead of passin' out  
from shock or forebrain  
trauma, he could keep  
fightin' on programed  
autopilot.





Bets said that ol' propane-hair actually seemed t' fight better with his body bein' run by backup software...

...though his conversation left a bit t' be desired by this point...

Final command:  
GET THE GIRL!

WHOKK

THOKK

WHAP

I pointed out the *obvious* to her, that doing "chi saao" moves, the oi "sticky hands," with a fella whose arms are on fire just *might* not be such a brilliant idea.

Sadly, she didn't seem to *appreciate* my helpful insight.



So she sees her *opening*, right, and whips out that ol' *psychic knife* dealee of hers. I told her that *real* badasses use *Adamantium blades*, of course.



So she told me t'-- well-- *sod off*. I said, *blimey!* you're a *cheeky bird*, eh wot?

Which got me even *more* crap, o' course.



Yep, poor Bets *hadn't* clued in that a fella with a software-run *backbrain* might not be 'specially *vulnerable* t' psychic disruption of his frontal lobes.



Kahh...?



It only lasts for a fraction of a second, she said, but that moment where you clearly see the opening for a fight-ending strike...

...that's some sweet stuff, she said. Relief, aggression an' triumphant anticipation, all wrapped up into a tiny slice o' time.

Get your poetic 'nixin' on, Bets, I said.





She nailed him good. Total sweet-spot hit. Don't get no better.

Cartilage mashin' under her foot, like steppin' on a bag of potato chips.



Course, Brit-chick Bets had t' say 'bag o' crieps,' needless t' say.



Yeah, a good takedown hit's truly a thing of beauty, she said. But finishin' moves? They're about as beautiful an' fulfillin' as choppin' wood, she said.



An' just try using goons an' thugs in a woodstove sometime, I said. They burn even worse 'n the greenest wood.

She gave me some crack about uncivilized backwoods Canadians for that line.



She said, nothing's more *annoyin'* than overly durable *wankers* who just won't *stay* down, right, Logan?

As in, fellas who are just too *dumb t'* know when they're supposed to be *dead*-- that said with a *smirkan'* a *twinkle* in her eye, naturally.

I said, hey, better t' have a body with an *annoyin'* healing factor than t' be transplanted into a body with a genetic an' enzymatic inability t' hold her liquor.

She said, well, that helps make me a *cheap date*, don't you think?

Then she makes with a burp, sounds like she was strangling a toad. Very demure an' ladylike.







She said, hey, I signed up for all the *cool* badass stuff, you know? Struttin' around *bare-legged*, trash-takin' with *aliens*, cuttin' bad guys down and *disappearin'* into the night...



All the *stylin'* stuff.



~hnnh~

Bets said she *didn't* sign up to play *cranial croquet* with some cyber-enhanced *Jerk* with a *Palm Pilot* in place of his *medulla oblongata*.



~huhh~

~hahh~

~hff~

I said, *Jagoff*? Hey, Brit chick, what happened t' *wanker*?



She said, well, I'm *drinking* with him, aren't I?

Be *dumb* bum. Walked right into *that* one.



~hnnh~

~hahh~



Though *Jerk* wasn't the word she used, I was *shocked*.



So she's *sittin'* there, all "*bloody 'ell!*" Thank goodness that's over!"

Though I gotta admit, in the whole time I *knew* Bets, she never *once* said "*bloody 'ell!*"...but I could *always* get a rise outta her by implyin' she *did* say that.

Anyway, it was at *this* point...

...that the *other* two wired-up goons, *also* on autopilot, came *stumblin'* outta the wreckage. *Wackiness* ensues.

Wah, wah, *waaah*.



Wasn't funny at the time, she said, but it got a *lot* funnier in retrospect. Well, lemme tell ya what *ain't* funny, bub.

The fact that there'll be no more *cheap dates*. No more *bad jokes*. No more gettin' crap about *moose* on my beer labels.

No more *Betsy*.

All I got left of her now are stories *about* war stories.

*Bloody 'ell.*

**The End**



A black and white illustration of Spider-Man in a crouched position, viewed from the side. He is wearing his iconic suit with the spider emblem on the chest and web patterns on the legs. The background is dark and textured.

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